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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBAMBA'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

REF: WINDHOEK 394

1. (SBU) BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM PRESIDENT HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBAMBA'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF NAMIBIA ON JANUARY 1. IT CONTAINS A STRONG APPEAL FOR POLITICAL TOLERANCE AND FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. THE SPEECH WAS DELIVERED AFTER A YEAR WHICH SAW A SERIES OF HIGH-PROFILE CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN SOUTHWEST AFRICA PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION (SWAPO) PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION (REFTEL).

12. (SBU) ON JANUARY 9, DAYS AFTER THE SPEECH WAS DELIVERED, THE RULING SWAPO PARTY CALLED FOR THE DISMISSAL OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NAMIBIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION (NBC), FOR ALLEGEDLY ORCHESTRATING-- OR AT LEAST ALLOWING-- THE APPEARANCE OF A RALLY FOR DEMOCRACY AND PROGRESS (RDP) PARTY FLAG BEHIND THE PRESIDENT AFTER HE READ HIS SPEECH ON NATIONAL TELEVISION. (USUALLY THE NATIONAL FLAG IS DISPLAYED FOR PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES.) THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT HAS DEMANDED A REPORT OF THE INCIDENT FROM THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY.

EXCERPTS OF SPEECH

13. (U) IT IS A SOURCE OF JOY THAT OUR COUNTRY HAS GENERALLY MAINTAINED A STATE OF PEACE AND SECURITY. OUR CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC ORDER IS GROWING STRONGER FROM YEAR TO YEAR. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS THIS YEAR.

14. (U) THE YEAR ALSO WITNESSED BY-ELECTIONS AT RUNDU RURAL WEST, EENHANA AND TOBIAS HAINYEKO CONSTITUENCIES, AS WELL AS THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS FOR THE NEWLY PROCLAIMED TOWNS OF NKURENKURU AND OMUTHIYA RESPECTIVELY.

15. (U) FELLOW NAMIBIANS, THE CONDUCT OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IS THE LIFEblood OF ANY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. IT IS THROUGH ELECTIONS THAT THE ELECTORATE CAN EXPRESS THEIR PREFERENCES FOR LEADERS AND FOR POLICY OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES CHAMPIONED BY DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES. THE SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT OF REGULAR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN OUR COUNTRY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OVER THE YEARS, THEREFORE, SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF OUR YOUNG DEMOCRACY.

16. (U) DESPITE THE POSITIVE TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR DEMOCRACY, THERE HAS BEEN SOME ISOLATED BUT DISTURBING INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE, ESPECIALLY DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS. IN SOME INSTANCES, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE HAS FLARED UP RESULTING IN INJURIES.

17. (U) I WOULD, THEREFORE, PARTICULARLY LIKE TO CALL UPON ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO DESIST FROM PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS THAT MAY LEAD TO VIOLENCE. ALL POLITICAL PARTIES AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS MUST CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF PEACEFUL NON-PROVOCATIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

18. (U) ANY ACT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE TAINTS THE IMAGE OF OUR COUNTRY AND DISCREDITS OUR CREDENTIALS AS A PEACE LOVING COUNTRY FOUNDED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW. WE MUST ALL OF US, POLITICAL LEADERS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE STRENGTH OF OUR DIVERSITY AND POLITICAL MATURITY SO THAT NAMIBIA CAN CONTINUE TO

SHINE AS ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST BEACONS OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL TOLERANCE, NOT ONLY ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT BUT ALSO AROUND THE WORLD. THE RETROGRESSIVE TENDENCIES OF ETHNIC BASED POLITICS, REGIONALISM AND OTHER VICES THAT SEEK TO DIVIDE OUR PEOPLE MUST NOT ONLY BE REJECTED, BUT IT MUST ALSO BE ROUNDLY CONDEMNED.

¶9. (U) WE MUST MOULD A POLITICAL ORDER BASED ON THE STRENGTH OF PERSUASION OF OUR POLITICAL IDEALS AND THE VITALITY OF OUR POLITICAL PROGRAMMES.

¶10. (U) IN NAMIBIA, THE VICTORY FOR POLITICAL POWER MUST BE WON OR LOST ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF IDEAS, WHERE THE PARTY WITH THE MOST CREDIBLE PROPOSALS AND TRACK RECORD FOR GOVERNANCE WILL GAIN THE MANDATE OF THE ELECTORATE THROUGH A SECRET BALLOT. IT IS THE IDEAS, THE VISION, THE TRACK RECORD AND INDEED, IT IS THE CORRECT AND SOUND PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF A POLITICAL PARTY WHICH CONVINCES THE ELECTORATE ABOUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF SUCH A POLITICAL PARTY. IT IS THOSE IDEAS AND THE VISION IN OUR PROGRAMMES WHICH WE MUST TAKE TO THE ELECTORATE THROUGH THE SECRET BALLOT IN A MATURE MANNER DEVOID OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE, PROVOCATION AND INTIMIDATION OF ONE ANOTHER.

¶11. (U) IN THIS REGARD, I APPEAL TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO STRICTLY ENSURE THAT POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE CONDUCTED WITHIN THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE NAMIBIAN CONSTITUTION AND OTHER LAWS OF OUR REPUBLIC. ALL POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD STRICTLY ADHERE TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT AGREED TO BY POLITICAL PARTIES. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO GUARANTEE PEACE, SECURITY, STABILITY AND NATIONAL UNITY IN OUR COUNTRY. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO PURSUE OUR POLICY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) DESPITE THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE APPEARANCE OF THE RDP FLAG, THE MESSAGE IN PRESIDENT POHAMBA'S SPEECH IS A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT THAT MARKS A FRESH POLITICAL TONE FOR THE NEW YEAR. WE HOPE THAT OTHER SENIOR SWAPO OFFICIALS WILL FOLLOW SUIT AND THAT THE POSITIVE DISCOURSE WILL RESONATE WITH THE RANK AND FILE.

MATHIEU